THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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Durham, N. C.

GENERAL LITERATURE AND THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

A few years ago, with our new sense of international responsibility and our concern over problems of international communication, it seemed likely that a genuine revival in the study of foreign languages might occur. New methods of intensive instruction brought remarkable results in the training of military personnel, and it was expected that after the war undergraduate teaching of languages would become more efficient. But, as post-war curricula are announced, it is evident that there will be less study of foreign language, rather than more. Everywhere (almost) such requirements as are maintained may be satisfied by high school study. And, in any event, since college students of the modern languages will increasingly emphasize the spoken language and written composition, even more than in the past the training will not be literary in

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AS OTHERS SEE US

THE ENGINEER

We believe that the principal purpose of such subjects as English, public speaking and the art of dealing with others in engineering curricula should be to acquaint the undergraduate with the importance of these subjects and to develop his appreciation for them as essential to his future career even as an engineer. Too often in the past an attempt has been made to get across a certain minimum of information rather than an attitude of mind. All of these liberal subjects should be taught by a person who has a sincere appreciation for the role of the engineer in society and who can fully understand the engineering point of view. It is only such leadership that can stimulate and impress the young engineering student with the importance and value of such liberal material.

For example, much of the student's antipathy for English can be traced, we believe, to a lack of

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C.E.A. MEETING IN NEW YORK, APRIL 13

The College English Association will hold a meeting at Columbia University, April 13, 1946. The meeting will be called to order at 10:30 A. M., in Room 307, Philosophy Hall, and will adjourn to the Faculty Club for lunch at 1:00 P. M. All college English teachers and all those interested in college English are warmly invited to attend this meeting.

The Program

Professor Odell Shepard will introduce and lead a discussion of **The College English Curriculum,** the report presented in this issue of the NEWS LETTER for approval by the members.

Mr. Henry Seidel Canby will speak on **English and the Humanities in College.**

President Mark Van Doren will develop "the idea that reading and writing should not be the sole concern of English departments, but that colleges as a whole, in all their work, should teach them."

Members are asked to bring their copies of the NEWS LETTER to the meeting. It is hoped that they will come prepared to discuss the report fully and freely. The cost of the luncheon to each will be moderate. Those expecting to attend the luncheon will please notify the Executive Secretary promptly.

Middle Atlantic Meeting

The meeting of the Middle Atlantic Section at Johns Hopkins University has been postponed until May 4, 1946. Further announcement soon.

COLLEGE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

This report was prepared by a College English Association committee appointed by President Mark Van Doren and composed of E. K. Brown (Chicago), Odell Shepard (Trinity), and Norman Foerster (Chapel Hill, N. C.), Chairman. It has been approved by the officers and directors of the Association. It is now published in the NEWS LETTER for approval by the members. Comment should be addressed to the Executive Secretary.

I. General Objectives

College English is concerned with two of the three "R's.". Reading and writing are of course closely related processes. The material of both is thought, and words as symbols of thought. The general objective of college English, regarded as a "skill," is to develop and refine the student's ability to think—to grasp the thought of others and to communicate his own thought.

But college English is concerned with far more than the development of skills. It is principally concerned with a subject, literature, close to philosophy and religion on one side and to various fine arts on the other. Because of the nature of the subject, the art of literature may and should be aimed at the development of personality in its total range of thought, feeling, imagination, judgment, will, and conduct. Through the heightened experience of life which great literature affords, the student should gain knowledge of mankind and of himself.

II. The Freshman-Sophomore Course

The best means of carrying out these general objectives, for the vast majority of students, we believe to be a unified two-year course in reading and writing based on the study of a few classics of literature of fundamental importance in our civilization. This course should be required of all students in Liberal Arts. Properly taught, it should serve as well the needs of students in Commerce, Engineering, etc., since they are to be persons and citizens as well as technical specialists.

Writing. We recommend the abandonment of the conventional freshman course in written composition. Despite its high cost in energy and money, it has seldom if ever proved satisfactory. (Its ineffectiveness has been well characterized by the author of "As

(Continued on page 4)

THE PROFESSOR FACES SPRING

May, wearing blossoms,
Leans tenderly over
Sliding knife languor
Into her lover.

Lilac and dogwood,
Wasting illusion.
Faithless the peony's
Red transfusion.

Tulips go brazen
In brindle or dapple
And bland is the bloom
On the bough of the apple.

Star-clustered cherry
Is tinsel array
Aping the heavenly
Milky way.

Soul, do not waver;
Body, be wary.
May is a learned
Apothecary.

Louis Hasley,
Notre Dame.

GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

Sexton, when my grave you fill,
Let's get down to tintacks:
Say my sanctity was nil
But I knew my syntax.

Friends, you took on sufferance
Much that I did ill,
But I knew the difference
Between shall and will.

Christopher Morley.

THE NEWS LETTER

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Membership in the College English Association, including THE NEWS LETTER, $2.00 a year. Subscription for Libraries, $1.50.

EDITORIAL

The train was crawling into the yards when he began to put on his coat. He was on leave with OWI; he'd done a book for them and he told good stories of some presidential broadcasts. He was probably going back to University work when he was through. As he arranged his scarf he smiled. "God certainly must love you English teachers, they're so many of you. But I've been kicking around colleges now for twenty-five years, and I'm damned if I see what you fellows do. What is English, anyway? Sometimes I think you try to do too many things and wind up doing nothing, and then sometimes it seems like you're just what the **"New Yorker"** calls the Department of Utter Confusion.

"When you try to teach students to write, you find they haven't got anything to say, so you try artificial insemination, and then you wonder why nobody likes it. You can't agree what your subject matter is, or what you ought to read, or why you ought to read it, or how you ought to teach it. Maybe you fellows know what you're doing, but it's a little confusing to a lot of people. Everybody talks about English, but nobody seems mean the same thing. It's learning grammar, or learning not to make mistakes, or learning to express yourself, as if you could express what you haven't got to send. Or it's learning to appreciate literature, and that's everything from the **Symposium** to **Captain From Castile.** Or it's learning to read last year's magazine articles. When you finally decide what it's going to be this term, every instructor rides herd on his classes on his own hobby horse. And what he really wants is to get them into his own field.

"Say, before we stop, let me tell you what one of the most prominent English scholars in this country said to me not long ago. You'd know him at once if I mentioned his name. He was laughing about the sort of thing he did; I don't know what his specialty is, but it doesn't matter. He said, 'You know, I don't see why they pay us for it. It's just a little game we play to amuse ourselves.' He thought it was pretty funny, and I guess it's harmless, all right. I'm not saying what I got my Ph.D. in. So long, I've got to run for a cab."

Buck Rogers and the Bible

A book the literary world has paid too little attention to, in our opinion, is Picture Stories from the Bible, published by Educational Comics. It is the complete Old Testament "told chronologically for the first time, in full color continuity."

The artists are the real thing, so far as comic books are concerned. Ask the kids who read Superman. Or take some of the Biblical characters, look only at their faces, and you'll see, for example, one of Buck Rogers' mad scientists. The paper and ink even smell like the comic books on the newsstands.

How many of the youngest generation could find the Bible dull when told this way, we can't imagine. Samson and Joshua, David and Solomon—there are excitement and adventure, blood and thunder for everyone. The one thing lacking is sex. Need we say that the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife is a good example? The picture book (featuring a very fetching gal) says: "Joseph grew into a handsome man and Potiphar's wife attempted to gain his affection." In the next panel: "But Joseph was aloof because he knew Potiphar would not like his friendship with the woman." Evidently the editor decided that even the thirty-ninth chapter of Genesis needed toning down for the small fry.—The Pleasures of Publishing, Feb. 11, 1946. Columbia Univ. Press.

APPOINTMENT BUREAU

New registrations and a rising number of inquiries give evidence of increasing interest in the Bureau. A representative list of candidates follows:

Man, Ph. D. Columbia, Asst. Prof., Phi Beta Kappa, varied experience, 18th Cent. and Vict.

Man, Ph. D. Harvard, Asst. Prof., Fellowships, varied experience, Modern Drama.

Man, Ph. D. Johns Hopkins, Assoc. Prof., Phi Beta Kappa, wide experience, Old English, Middle English, Victorian.

Man, Ph. D. Cornell, Professor, wide teaching and administrative experience, Middle English, Shakespeare, 19th Cent.

Man, Ph. D. Chicago, Professor, wide experience, publications, Am. Lit.

Man, Ph. D. Iowa, Professor, wide experience, Am. Lit.

Man, Ph. D. Yale, Asst. Prof., wide experience, Am. Lit.

Man, Ph. D. Cornell, Assoc. Prof., wide teaching and administrative experience, publications, Drama, Composition.

Woman, Ph. D., Asst. Prof., experience, publications, Medieval Period, Modern Poetry.

Woman, M. A. and further work, Instructor, experience, Am. Lit. and Writing.

Woman, B. A. (Ph. D. nearly completed), Phi Beta Kappa, experience, 17th and 18th Centuries.

Man, Ph. D. Pennsylvania, Professor, wide teaching and administrative experience, Am. Lit., Mod. Drama.

Woman, Ph. D. Chicago, Assoc. Prof., wide experience, 17th and 19th Centuries, Contemp., World Lit.

Man, M. A. Columbia, Instructor, Phi Beta Kappa, experience, Novel, Victorian.

Vacancies for which there are no candidates:

Two department chairmen have requested candidates with training and experience in speech and dramatics. Minimum $2700 - $2800.

LITERATURE

(Continued from page 1)

character. The plight of the classical languages will continue deplorable.

On the other hand, the new interest in general education has inevitably created new interest in general literature. Historical surveys of English and American literature and types courses will seldom be compulsory for all students in the liberal arts curriculum; the required courses — entitled **Literature, The Humanities, Great Books, World Literature,** etc.—will present general literature. The change will have far-reaching implications. It means that books will be studied less in terms of their historical backgrounds and less in terms of their medium of expression—more in terms of their permanent significance for humanity.

The new courses will doubtless be staffed chiefly by teachers trained in English and American literature. But teachers of foreign literature (particulary of the classics) will often be recruited. Some of them will hesitate to accept this new responsibility, but if they refuse they lose precious opportunity to interest students in their fields of study and to teach literature as something other than exercise in translation, a privilege too few of them have hitherto experienced. The new courses will also recruit teachers from history, philosophy, religion, and other subjects. All who teach the work must be willing to broaden their interests.

The impetus behind the organization of these courses has not always been provided by English teachers. The Harvard Committee, for example, had no representative of its English Department, unless one counts I. A. Richards as such. The reaction of English departments to the new courses has, in fact, sometimes been quite unfriendly. Very many English teachers, indoctrinated in relativistic thinking, consider themselves suited to teach only subjects in which they have specialized. They do not understand that it is more important for a teacher of **Oedipus** and **Hippolytus** to have thought long and deeply of the nature of tragedy than for him to have read the plays in the Greek and to have had studies in Greek literary history. These last are undeniably important, but they are not most important. There are also those who may be counted on to express pious horror at the use of translations, in spite of the many fine translations available in English. These teachers should be reassured by the presence in the course of several of the great English masterpieces (including, I believe, the minor genres) that literature as artful use of language will not be neglected. Proponents of literature "as such" and of the Great Books need not quarrel irreconcilably.

It may be anticipated that majors in general literature and in the Great Books will be estab-

lished in many colleges and in the more liberal universities. And perhaps departments of general literature will follow. In that case, English and foreign language departments will presumably continue to offer the usual courses in literary history and in language, rhetoric, and composition. The new departments of general literature will be dedicated to teaching literature in its general relationship to life.

To many, such prediction will sound like impractical nonsense. But whether or not such reform in departmental structure is anywhere likely, there is realization everywhere that in general education literature must be taught more humanely. The new courses stem from that realization. In some institutions English departments are already in fact departments of general literature. Courses in American literature have, indeed, been systematically developed everywhere, but usually the program in general literature has been haphazard, depending upon the chance interests of individual instructors. Departments of English must now, it seems to me, plan substantial courses in general literature, or the responsibility must be delegated elsewhere. It is unlikely that foreign language departments, preoccupied with teaching language and composition, will accept it.

In those colleges and universities where no responsibility for general education is seriously acknowledged, we shall as in the past graduate as bachelors of art men and women who have no acquaintance with the great books outside English and American literature. And before long, perhaps, it will not seem necessary that they have studied any literature at all.

Seymour M. Pitcher,
State University of Iowa.

Professor Pitcher's statement, a report of his address to the Chicago meeting, is the second in a series designed to survey English and English Teachers. They are presented for discussion by the members. It is hoped to edit them and publish them as a CEA Report after there has been full opportunity for comment.

Announcements of the CEA Appointment Bureau will go out to over six hundred colleges in the near future. Members' attention is called to the advantage of being registered with the Bureau at this time.

ENGINEER

(Continued from page 1)

understanding of the engineering student by his English professor. This point is particularly well illustrated by a recent article by A. M. Buchan, entitled "English in Basic Army Courses."* He described the effect of encouraging the professor of liberal subjects to appreciate the relation of engineering to society in these words:

"The professors learn from their students. An interest in technical subjects has been born, and the old literary bias against them is disappearing. A notion of culture as an attitude assumed towards any subject, technical or philosophical, rather than as familiarity with certain arts and books begins to appear, and the teacher of Wordsworth or Thoreau finds himself engaged, and happily, in discussing baking methods or the development of alloys. For the teacher of speech, too, there can be a realization that the orderly description of a coke oven is just as valuable practice as an argument on Fascism."

Certain aspects of English are particularly essential in industry. These include letter writing, preparation of reports, and public speaking. Although many other phases of the college student's preparation in the field of English contribute to his cultural development, few are as directly essential to industry as these.

With the rapid increase in communication methods, it is often difficult for college students to recognize that much of their time in industry will be spent in the writing of letters. Although possibly beyond the scope of most English classes as they are organized today, the way in which ideas are expressed in letters has great significance. Not only must written statements be concise and to the point, but they should be so phrased that they will obtain proper consideration from the recipient. They should conserve the readers' time by being neither so brief and concise as to require the exercise of the imagination or so long and detailed as to confuse the real point. For another thing, letters—particularly business letters—should not only be so clear that they are readily understood, but they should be written so that they can not be misunderstood.

It must always be emphasized that while an oral statement is often forgotten, a written letter is usually retained for some time.

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I'VE BEEN READING

THE ART OF PLAIN TALK, by Rudolf Flesch (New York: Harper and Brothers; 210 pages).

Everyone who writes college catalogues, government orders, or textbooks should read this book, which grew out of a Ph. D. dissertation on "Marks of Readable Style." Whoever reads it is sure of an exciting time and many chuckles over what was meant to be plain writing but is not.

Mr. Flesch proves by many examples that he has developed a yardstick to measure the readability of writing. His formula calls for shortening sentences, for reducing the affixes (prefixes and suffixes), and for adding a personal note that is found in gossip. Oliver Wendell Holmes said that good writing is just fine talk, and Mr. Flesch shows that people use awkward devices in writing that they would never think of using in speaking.

All of these chapters are readable, on such subjects as "Talking Down and Reading Up," "Empty Words," "Can Science Be Explained?" "The Trouble With Textbooks," and "How to Read the Federal Register." You will be surprised to learn the tricks employed by writers for "Time" and the "Reader's Digest," by Robert Louis Stevenson in "Treasure Island," and by the writers of comics.

"Plain Talk" is admittedly for practical purposes only. News writers and almost everybody else should get much from this book, but English teachers may find that it proves too much. We must leave a place for the prose of Ruskin as well as that of Addison, and for Newman and Thackeray as well as for Bunyan and Goldsmith. But how I wish I could present a copy to all who write portions of college catalogues.

J. Gordon Eaker.

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BACK ISSUES OF THE NEWS LETTER

The editor's file contains no copy of Vol. IV, No. 6 (Oct. '42) or Vol. VI, No. 2 (Feb. '44). Several Libraries have written that they lacked a copy of Vol. VII, No. 6 (Aug. '45) and Vol. VII, No. 7 (Oct '45). The meagre response to the last appeal for out-of-stock copies indicates the esteem in which members hold them. But it is hoped that a few generous members will respond to this request for copies of issues mentioned above.

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ENGINEER

(Continued from page 3)

If an oral statement gives offense, it can be quickly retracted or changed, while there is seldom opportunity to observe the effect of the written word. The form and technique of writing business letters should not, of course, be neglected, but a poorly phrased letter with excellent form will receive little consideration wherein a well-phrased letter even poor form may pass unnoticed.

In industry much information concerning the status of projects and of the business of various sections is conveyed through written reports. Such reports enable supervision to estimate the progress of any particular job and the value of continuing any given project. To determine such broad questions it is naturally unnecessary for supervision to know the intricate or complicated processes which have led to final results. Contrary to the use of the dramatic climax in literature, therefore, such reports must be so organized that the results can be readily located and the effect of any assumptions which have been made on the results can be properly evaluated. The importance of organization in report writing is therefore of great importance in industry. As a general rule the results should appear almost at the beginning of any well-written report. Colleges are often unaware of this aspect of report writing.

Although proficiency as a public speaker is not a prerequisite for success in industry, most industrial leaders must be able to express their ideas in a concise and accurate manner. Since industry is essentially a group of individuals working together to accomplish certain goals, there are many occasions where groups of such people must meet to consider and discuss policies and programs. The college graduate who can express his ideas forcefully in such a conference and who thereby wins others to his point of view is a decided asset to the organization. Conferences of this nature occur almost continuously in industry, and the college graduate must be sufficiently well trained to merit respect and confidence when he participates in the discussion Practice in speaking informally to a small group is therefore more to be emphasized than formal talks to large audiences.

There are many other aspects of the teaching of English in the college curriculum. Most of these aspects, however, have been so well covered in present curricula that we would hesitate to make recommendations for changes. The college graduates of today are much more literate than their predecessors and the beneficial effect in industry has been great.

K. B. MacEachron, Jr.,
General Electric Company.

This article is the summary of discussions among several of the men who are associated in the training of young graduate engineers for the General Electric Company. It came in reply to a request from the editor for a statement of what training in English was felt to be desirable in the college graduates employed by G. E.

* This article appears in the April, 1944, issue of the Journal of Engineering Education.

FROM THE FILES

It has for many years been my feeling that the English teachers in this country were too narrowly devoted to problems of technique and too blind to the broader implications of English Literature and its ramifications in the fields of Philosophy and History. I tried to express this in an article ("English as Humane Letters"), printed in the **Atlantic Monthly**, September 1914 . . .

I should like to base the study of English in this country on the School of Literae Humaniores at Oxford, and I think that if we could do that, we would give our Departments of English Literature a dignity and influence which they have never had.

I have great respect for philologists and for Philology as a science, and I admire the heroic efforts of the teachers of English Composition, though I must say I think the results are singularly meagre in proportion to the efforts expended. Neither group, however, has seemed to me to meet the humanistic and cultural needs of the subject . . .

Frank Aydelotte.

Reprinted in part from The **News Letter**, I, 2, Oct. 1939.

Members are invited to contribute to "I've Been Reading."

A campaign by mail for new members will begin at once. Present members are requested to mention CEA favorably to their colleagues.

CURRICULUM

(Continued from page 1)

Others See Us" in the **News Letter** of the CEA for December, 1945.) It has been unsatisfactory for many reasons, one of which is the custom of assigning the unattractive task to be performed to immature apprentices, graduate assistants and young doctors, or to reluctant older teachers who have shown no special distinction in the other work of the department. But the main reason for its relative failure seems clear enough. The direct approach in the teaching of writing has involved the effort to teach writing **in vacuo**, apart from content, since it was found that the freshman brought to the course very little content and less interest in communicating it. The ordinary student is not in the normal position of the writer, a person who has something he wants to say.

Consequently the "pure" writing course soon became a hybrid. Reading, at first introduced to provide stylistic "models," was presently used to provide subject-matter and to stimulate a personal reaction. A bewildering variety of books of readings appeared, ranging from specimens of the best English literature to ephemeral essays and stories taken from current books and magazines. Many of them tried to represent, in a more or less tight pattern, the whole complex of modern life and thought, and forced the teacher of English to be a teacher of things-in-general. A number of other books, eschewing all patterns, were "omnibus" volumes generous in their aimlessness. Thus the addition of reading in the writing course was the inevitable consequence of the fact that (to use the title of an article in the journal **etc.** a few years ago) "You Can't Write Writing." "One cannot write writing, any more than one can read reading. One can only write, just as one can only read, history, or geography, or physiology, or some other such subject about which writing can be done." Readings have served to give the freshman something to write **about.** In place of the miscellaneous readings now widely current, we propose, as indicated more fully below, texts of great literature.

Something should be said here concerning students seriously deficient in writing ability. Through the years they have been placed leges upon which we might com-

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in "sub-freshman" English, in special sections of the regular freshman course, in post-freshman courses. Granting or withholding "credit" for this elementary work has made scant difference in the results. College or university committees on students' use of English have been bogged in endless perplexities. Semi-illiterate students, improving not at all, or improving and relapsing, appear to be chronic and incurable cases. The morale of the class, when they are segregated, is generally deplorable, depressing for students and teachers alike. The college has found no way of satisfactorily coping with this problem. We believe that the time has come to turn the problem back to the high school on the ground that the college years have proved too late for a solution. In colleges where "low" students are numerous, we recommend that they be placed in special sections of the regular course under the most sympathetic instructors obtainable. Here, at all events, they will not hamper instruction of average and superior students. We also recommend some provision of individual remedial help for below-average students and any others who are aware of handicaps in their writing, a sort of "clinic," as it is sometimes called, to which such students may come voluntarily.

Average and superior students, as we conceive, should continue, in the two-year course, to do as much supervised writing (say 16,000 words) as they have ordinarily done in the old freshman composition. We do not propose any relaxation of attention to writing. But instead of writing for the eradication of errors, or writing of trivialities, it should be writing on the college level, writing about something which the student has been made to feel important because of its context in a substantial course. It should be judged, as writing is normally judged, for its content and form as a unit. Elementary blunders in syntax and punctuation, which should have been brought under control in high school, will often bedevil student and instructor, but the best attack on them in college is indirect. Experience shows that they tend to decrease with the growth of the student's interest in what he is saying. The mind of a fairly intelligent freshman or sophomore might wisely be likened to a garden sufficiently advanced so that the weeds it still contains can best be attended to by the normal growth of the plants. At this point in his development the student should fix his attention not upon his still besetting sins against grammar and syntax but upon the positive task of communicating thought as clearly and validly as he can.

That the student should learn to communicate thought clearly and validly is the proper concern of his teachers in all departments of the college. Ideally all teachers in all departments should teach English, but actually few can do it well. Nor is it generally feasible to have the English staff read papers in courses in the other departments. If they grade the writing alone, they violate the unity of thought and expression; if they take content into account, they assume the role of professors of everything. In the course here proposed, English departments have an adequate opportunity. If they do their work well for two years, their achievement may be expected to suffice.

Reading. We recommend the abandonment of the survey of English literature conventionally provided, as a requirement or elective, in the sophomore year. Aside from its fragmentariness and superficiality, aside from its undue emphasis on literary history, it fails to introduce the student to the literature he needs most. Fifty years ago it was more pertinent. In a day when educated people received a Biblical and Classical culture which departments of English could take for granted as a background, in a day when American civilization was more definitely English, and American literature had scarcely won its place in the modern world, a survey of our English literary heritage seemed natural enough. Today it would seem to be appropriate, if at all, rather to the major in English, either at the beginning or, better, at the end of his period of concentration.

In the proposed two-year course for liberal arts students in general, the choice of literature to be studied depends on recognition that the cultural foundations of America are not merely English but broadly European, hence essentially Hellenic and Christian. A second great war has brought home to us that civilization itself is in peril, and that what we mean by civilization is finally to be understood most deeply by knowledge of the ideas and imaginative forms basic in European culture, ignorance of which has become widespread even among educated people.

This need of a wider orientation has suggested to some educators the introduction of a survey of all the humanities, in all periods. To any such ambitious solution we are opposed because, even if two years were allowed, the result would be thin and misleading, and furthermore, because a cooperative course involving a succession of lectures is not so much a unified course as a series of short courses. Among the various humanities literature is best suited to the capacities of most students, and, among the departments of literature, English is most readily available for combined instruction in reading and writing, though it may often be desirable to add to the staff certain members of other departments. It is true that, if the proposed plan is adopted, many instructors of English whose training was over-specialized would be obliged to equip themselves for parts of the course relatively unfamiliar to them—to their great advantage. In any case their adjustment should be easier and pleasanter than that of doctors of philosophy embarking upon their work in the old freshman composition.

The choice of books to be included in the two-year course can best be determined by experience. The sort of selection we have in mind may be indicated by the list in the Harvard Report of 1945: Homer, the Greek tragedies, Plato, the Bible, Vergil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Tolstoy. We agree that "eight great books would be trying to do too much" in one year. We might also mention a two-year course introduced at the University of Iowa in 1933: first semester, "The American Heritage" (Emerson, Mark Twain, and John Brown's Body); second semester, "Homer and the Bible"; third semester, "Chaucer and Shakespeare"; fourth semester, "Greek Drama and Plato."

Of high importance is the point of view from which the reading is to be done. On the negative side, we agree with the Harvard Report, which asserts that a general education course in literature should not aim mainly at an understanding of authors or of periods, or of historic or literary development, or of artistic craftsmanship. Instead of any of these, we believe that the course should aim mainly at understanding of the human values suggested by the books, understanding above all of the human values in the two great creative traditions of Western civilization, the religious tradition of Palestine and the humanistic tradition of Greece. The student should be brought to see, for example, that the dignity of man,

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which has become doubly precious to us in our day of unspeakable indignities, is an idea heavily laden with Greek, Hebrew, and Christian memories. He should be shown that only by a direct knowledge and personal experience of such ideas and values at the source can he fully enter into that modern civilization which it will soon be his duty to maintain.

III. The Major In English

The undergraduate who chooses to concentrate or major in English may be expected to carry out more fully the objective stated in the last paragraph of section I, above. His concern with literature will be primarily critical rather than historical. While he should attain a due conception of the continuity of literature and of the play of historical forces upon it, his main task is to enter sympathetically into the best literature in his language, to grasp the great literary productions of various periods as works of art and vehicles of knowledge of human nature, and to estimate them in the light of his developing critical standards. In order to accomplish this well, he will need to supplement his work in English, as amply as time permits, with studies in related subjects, such as philosophy, history, the fine arts, classical languages and literatures, modern foreign languages and literatures. He should be at home in at least one language and literature other than English.

Among the courses offered in his own department, the candidate for the major might reasonably be required to include in his program either a year-course on the classics of English literature or semester-courses on Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton (authors only partly covered by the freshman-sophomore course). His total responsibility we think should be indicated by a reading list, composed of most of the reading in the courses just mentioned, together with enough additional titles to give a reasonable conception of English and American literature. For the generality of students experience has shown that such a list must be kept short. Upon this reading list there should be a comprehensive examination in the spring of the senior year. Obviously, the questions in this examination must be carefully chosen to represent the objectives of the department (purely factual questions, we assume, should be omitted or minimized).

As a final exercise in writing, we propose a graduating essay demonstrating the student's capacity to think and construct, although this requirement may be found possible only with candidates for Honors. If an Honors plan is instituted, we conceive that it should be distinguished by some provision for independent study, by a longer reading list, as well as by a higher qualitative requirement. We are of the opinion that Honors succeed as a rule only when a third or half of the major students go in for them. To prevent undue concentration in one department, and to provide room for studies in related departments, the number of hours or credits for the major in English should be kept as low as possible.

IV. List of Courses

A cursory survey of college and university catalogues shows, as one might expect, that departments of English in this country are offering undergraduates a wide variety of courses. Most of these are adjusted to the real needs of undergraduate students, but others appear to be more suited to graduates. Some are concerned with relatively unimportant fields of study, some with too-small segments of important fields, and some with the interests of instructors rather than of students.

While recognizing that complete uniformity in this matter is unattainable and probably undesirable, we feel that there should be more general agreement than now obtains regarding the **minimum and essential offering** of a department of English. We have therefore attempted to draw up a standard English curriculum in harmony with the consensus of the profession, hoping that it may have at least a suggestive value to departments engaged in a reconsideration of their offerings.

The following, then, is a list of courses which we believe every department of English should offer —not necessarily to the exclusion of others. It includes the two-year course already described; year-courses in English and American classics suitable for non-majors as well as majors; various courses of more limited scope; and courses which are primarily devices to fit the comprehensive examination and graduating essay into the "credit" pattern.

Essential Courses

1. Classics of Literature (see section II, above).
2. Classics of American Literature.
3. Classics of American Literature.
4. Chaucer (one semester).
5. Shakespeare (one semester).
6. Milton (one semester).
7. English Novel (18th and 19th centuries).
8. Contemporary Literature (English and American).
9. English Language (one semester).
10. Imaginative Writing.
11. Literary Criticism.
12. Comprehensive Examination.
13. Graduating Essay.

Remarks:

English Language. What undegraduates appear to need is not a history of the English language or a formal study of linguistic science, but rather a course on "Words and Their Ways" applying the "case method" especially to etymology and semantic change.

Literary Criticism. Primarily not historical but theoretical and practical.

Speech. Speech is left to a separate department, where there is one. Where there is not, English should offer a course affording practice in public address and oral reading.

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